PITTA

Newsletter of Deccan Birders (formerly Birdwatchers' Society of Andhra Pradesh)
New Series Volume 20 Number 9 August 2023

FIELD TRIP-1: Sunday, 6th August 2023, 6.30AM: Yenkathala Grasslands, Mominpet. Meeting Points: NMDC, Masab Tank, 5.00AM; Taramati Baradari Main Entrance, 5.20AM. Trip Coordinator(s): Sudhir K Moorti (Mobile: 96522-83335)

Mominpet is a mixed forest with shrub, grasslands and a lake and is rich in bird life. Some of the key birds to look out for are Harriers, Eagles, Black-headed Cuckooshrike, Chestnut-bellied Sandgrouse, Tree Pipit, Rain Quail, Jungle Bush Quail, Rock Bush Quail, Barred Buttonquail, Painted Francolin, Baya Weaver etc.

FIELD TRIP-2: Sunday, 27th August 2023, 6.30AM: Manjeera WLS. Meeting Points: IKEA, Madhapur, 5.00AM; Allwyn Crossroads Foot Overbridge, 5.15AM; BHEL Bus Stop, 5.30AM; Taj Dhaba, Muthangi, 5.45AM. Trip Coordinator(s): Srikanth Bhamidipati (Mobile: 97388-40070)

Manjeera Dam and surrounding fields are good viewing points for finches, wagtails, ibises, munias and more. The area is also home to various species of birds: we will look out for Watercock, Red-necked Phalarope, Small Minivet, Fork-tailed Drongo Cuckoo, Chestnut-bellied Sandgrouse, Rain Quail, Jungle Bush Quail, Rock Bush Quail, Barred Buttonquail, Painted Francolin, Baya Weaver etc.

Both trips will be half-day trips, so carry adequate water and breakfast/snacks, and protective gear if required. Strict Covid protocols will be followed; please ensure you wear masks, carry a sanitiser and maintain social distancing. Non-members are most welcome; however, they are requested to contribute Rs. 100/- per person to the Deccan Birders kitty.

AN EVENING WITH DR ASAD RAHMANI
Report: Talk on 'History of Natural History Writing', Hyderabad, July 29, 2023

JVD Moorty

A section of the audience with Dr Rahmani (Photo: JVD Moorty)

Saturday, the 29th of July 2023, 1830 hours was to be the rendezvous with Dr Rahmani for a talk on "The History of Nature Writing" at Vidyaranya High School.

A cloudy evening, weather inclined to being far from inclement; the wait to be awash in the flow of words by Dr Rahmani was palpable.

The gathering first irrigated its collective throat with cups of hot tea and whetted the appetite with the typical 'Osmania' biscuits.

The meeting started with a visibly surprised Dr Rahmani cutting a heart-shaped chocolate cake in honour of his birthday the next day. Following this gastronomic teaser, came the auditory delight with a brief introduction of the speaker by Aasheesh Pittie. A stickler for punctuality, Dr Rahmani was as eager as always to get things under way.

Transporting us back in time, the talk began with a depiction of Palaeolithic cave paintings found in Lascaux (Engl. /*læˈskoʊ*/ la-SKOH) in a complex of caves in the Dordogne region of southwestern France, which are renowned for their exceptional quality, size, sophistication and antiquity. Dating back to more than 20,000 years ago, these depict primarily large animals, once native to that region. The paintings were picture stories of the lives of early mankind. The written word followed much later.

Moving forward in time brought us to the ancient Greeks and the Romans with Aristotle, the Greek philosopher, being mentioned. His work *History of Animals* (Historia animalium), ca. 4th century BC, is one of the major works in Biology, and was a first attempt to classify animals into groups based on their similarities and differences in their physiologies. It is a big treatise dealing with morphology (shapes), ecology, behaviour, and taxonomy. Aristotle's observations, covering different species, are truly amazing. This book was preceded by his work titled *Parts of Animals* (Περὶ ζῴων μορίων - Perí zóon moríon), and followed by *Movement of Animals* (*De motu animalium*). Aristotle also wrote about his observations on bird migration. To name a few of his observations: the tongue of the chameleon, twisting of the neck by the Wryneck, differences between dolphin and fish, impact of climate (!), animal communication.

The Arabs, after the fall of the Greek empire, then took centre-stage with their translation of The Book of Animals titled *Kitab al-Hayawan.* The book depicted animals and birds with great clarity and accuracy.

Iliad and *Odyssey*, the two classics of Greek and world literature, ascribed to Homer are replete with observations of birds, animals, butterflies, animal behaviour, physiology, neurological conditions, meteorological events, and even causes of weather conditions.

Ancient Indian texts also mentioned animals and plants. The Rigveda cites about 20 birds: e.g. the *Rigveda 2.42 and 2.43* describes the song of the Grey Francolin; the *Atharvaveda* observes that the Red-headed Merlin hunts in pairs. The pairing up of birds is a theme that fascinated many of the text-writers of the time, with mention being made of the Sarus Crane, Brahminy Ducks and the Common Myna, amongst others.

The V-formation of the Demoiselle Cranes and the Bar-headed Goose was said to have been copied during the Kurukshetra war.

Dr Rahmani next cited Kalidasa, (ca. 4th–5th century CE), the famous classical Sanskrit author, often considered to be ancient India's greatest poet and playwright based his plays and poetry on the Hindu Puranas and philosophy. His description in his epic poem *Meghadūta*, he speaks about the *Raj-Hansas* (Bar-headed Goose) yearning for *Manasa* (Lake Mansoravar) and how they fortified themselves with tender lotus-stems for their migration and showed *Zugunruhe*, a migratory restlessness before they started their flight.

Coming down the ages to the Mughal period, the speaker pointed out how all the premier Mughal rulers of the time from Babur to Aurangzeb were interested in natural history; Babur's *Baburnama* is teeming with natural history observations. Jahangir was so enamoured by nature, that he had life forms captured in paintings by his master painter Ustad Mansur. Jahangir's observations in his autobiography *Tuzuk-e-Jahangiri*, that covers the first 19 years of his life until 1621, read like that of a very observant biologist. On spotting a Brown Dipper in Kashmir, he was taken in by the bird's behaviour and wanted to ascertain whether it was "waterfowl with webbed feet or had open feet like land birds." He had them caught and recorded his inspection.

With the advent of the British period in India came a plethora of natural history writings, among them Edward Hamilton Aitken (popularly known as EHA), Rudyard Kipling, EP Gee, Kenneth Anderson, Jim Corbett, et al. Dr Rahmani dealt with these names and a few others recounting very fascinating anecdotes.

The popularity of nature writing is encapsulated in the fact that seven universities in the UK have courses on natural history writing – a new genre in literature has arisen. The offshoot led to the rise of some brilliant exponents on nature writing in English, viz. Gilbert White, James Fisher, Derek Radcliffe, W H Hudson, J A Baker. Dr Rahmani recommended Rachel Carson's *Silent Spring*, widely considered the most important environmental book of the 20th century, as a must-read.

Dr Rahmani addressing the gathering (Photo: Sudhir K Moorti)

In India, the Journal of the Bombay Natural History Society published papers by hunters with keen observations. And this is where the world took notice of the father of birdwatching in India, Dr Salim Ali, whose classic paper on the Baya was based solely on field studies (The nesting habits of the Baya *Ploceus phillipinus* in JBNHS 34 (4): 947-964).

This, said Dr Rahmani, led to the start of behavioural studies in the field led by Julian Huxley in Britain, Salim Ali, Konrad Lorenz et al. Amongst the other nature writers named were Zafar Futehally, Humayun Abdulali, M. Krishnan, Jamal Ara (the first woman birdwatcher of India), Deepak Dalal, Arefa Tehsin, S Theodore Bhaskaran, A J T Johnsingh, Ranjit Lal, and Aasheesh Pittie, almost all of whom were personally known to Dr Rahmani.

Dr Rahmani concluded the talk by highlighting the fact that nature writers can be conservationists as well, and how some of the works have brought about awareness for conservation and implementation.

A very captivating, informative and fascinating talk by a naturalist par excellence came to an end with a standing ovation to the speaker.

A member of the audience asking a question
(Photo: Sudhir K Moorti)

The group with Dr Rahmani (Photo courtesy: Sudhir K Moorti)

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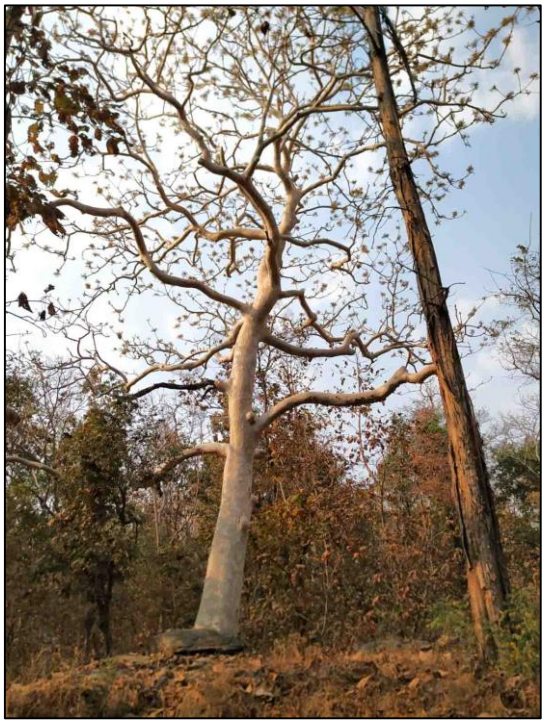
BIRDING IN THE LAND OF SHER KHAN
Trip Report: Pench National Park, February 27-28, 2023

Text & Photos: Sita Susarla



White *Kulu* (Ghost Tree)

The beautiful deciduous forest of Pench National Park consists of a wide variety of trees like *Mahua*, Teak, *Palash*, White *Kulu* or Ghost Tree, Bamboo bushes, *Neem*, *Dhaora*, *Amaltas* and many wild grasses reeds and creepers. The Park is located in the Seoni and Chhindwara districts of southern Madhya Pradesh, bordering Maharashtra, and is famous for the Bengal Tiger, Wild Boar, Chital, Sambhar, Nilgai, Chausingha (Four-horned Antelope), Striped Hyena and Indian Wolf, among other wild animals.

The National Park gets its name from the river Pench that flows from North to South through the park, dividing the forest into eastern and western zones. The Park's Turia gate section constitutes a rich avian habitat and about 250 bird species are known to have been identified here. This is where we spent a couple of days bird watching in the last week of February 2023.

Turia Gate, Pench National Park

When we started off on the first day, trekking through the forest that was dappled with early morning sunlight and alive with the chirping of Yellow-throated Sparrows (aka Chestnut-shouldered Petronias), Purple Sunbirds, Alexandrine and Plum-headed Parakeets, the first birds we saw were a pair of Jungle Owlets, perched among a splash of reddish orange Palash flowers. The typical dawn calls of the Owlets were answered by Owlets on nearby trees and, after a brief chat, they all flew away into their hideouts, marking the beginning of another day.

Jungle Owlet

***Butea monosperma* (Palash Tree)**

The Palash tree or *Butea monosperma* displays reddish orange honey-bearing flowers to which a large number of big and small birds are attracted.

Alexandrine Parakeet

The Black Drongos, Large-billed Crows, Alexandrine, Rose-ringed and Plum-headed Parakeets, Rufous Treepie, Brahminy Starlings and Common Mynas were seen pecking at these flowers, along with Brown-headed and Coppersmith Barbets.

Black-hooded Oriole

The Golden and Black-hooded Orioles, Jungle Babblers and assorted Bulbuls were also spotted on these flowers. It looked like the Small Minivets had imbibed the crimson colour from Palash so as to camouflage themselves. Since the trees were in full bloom and hardly any leaves on them, it was very easy to spot the birds on them.

We had hired a local guide to take us through all the bird habitats in the park and he did a spectacular job of showing us a large number of birds. Flocks of Yellow-throated Sparrows were everywhere to be seen, in the bushes, on the shrubs and on the trees.

A Black Redstart was seen along with a pair of Indian and Oriental Magpie Robins. There was a Long-tailed Shrike and a couple of Common Woodshrikes on the Mahua trees, and a Black-rumped Flameback was pecking at the bark.

We moved further into the forest and into marshy area lined with reeds. On the adjacent reeds a pair of Common Kingfishers were busy making frequent dives into the water. There were Indian Silverbills, White-rumped and Scaly-breasted Munias and Baya Weavers perched on nearby bushes, and the nearby pylons were inhabited by mixed flocks of Grey-throated Martins, Red-rumped Swallows and Wire-tailed Swallows.

Among the land birds, the fascinating sighting was that of the Painted Francolins. Though we could not get good pictures of them, their calls were heard here and there, and at one particular point we saw four of them crisscrossing two adjacent fields.

Kohka Lake

The last halt before lunch was the Kohka Lake, which is located on the edge of the park. Though the lake was an ideal location for migratory birds, we could not sight any except for a few Ruddy Shelducks. We felt that possibly they had left the lake sooner than expected.

Large Cuckooshrike

The guide said that the presence of villages near the lake and the activities of people, especially fishing and cattle grazing have actually resulted in a decrease in the number of migratory water birds. There were however a large number of Asian Openbills, Grey and Purple Herons, Red-naped Ibis, and Citrine, White and White-browed Wagtails.

On the second morning, our trek was into the forest area along an undulating stream that was mostly dried up. However, the bird activity was very high and we were thrilled to see a Large Cuckoo-shrike perched on a branch right above us.

At the same time we were distracted by a rustle in the dried leaves just a few feet in front of us. It turned out to be a Puff-throated Babbler trying to hold on to a dragonfly that it had just caught. As we walked, the Greater Racket-tailed Drongos, about five in number, and two Black-hooded Orioles also moved along with us for quite some time. The list of birds became lengthier every minute and it was a fantastic birding experience.

Puff-throated Babbler

Greater Racket-tailed Drongo

Sambhar

Chital (Spotted Deer)

After lunch and a little rest, it was time for a Jungle Safari. Though Tigers could not be sighted, there were herds of Sambhar and Chital, Wild Boar and Golden Jackal.

Wild Boar

Golden Jackal

The most memorable sights, however, were of the innumerable number of Palash trees in full bloom at this time of the year, with their reflection in the lakes and water bodies emanating a glassy red glow.

Sulphur-bellied Warbler

The full list of birds seen during the trip is given below:

Sl No	Species Name	Scientific Name	Sl No	Species Name	Scientific Name
1	Ruddy Shelduck	*Tadorna ferruginea*	**7**	Eurasian Collared Dove	*Streptopelia decaocto*
2	Indian Spot-billed Duck	*Anas poecilorhyncha*	**8**	Spotted Dove	*Streptopelia chinensis*
3	Grey Francolin	*Francolinus pondicerianus*	**9**	Laughing Dove	*Streptopelia senegalensis*
4	Painted Francolin	*Francolinus pictus*	**10**	Yellow-footed Green Pigeon	*Treron phoenicopterus*
5	Little Grebe	*Tachybaptus ruficollis*	**11**	Greater Coucal	*Centropus sinensis*
6	Rock Pigeon (Feral Pigeon)	*Columba livia*	**12**	Asian Koel	*Eudynamys scolopaceus*

Sl No	Species Name	Scientific Name	Sl No	Species Name	Scientific Name
13	Asian Palm Swift	*Cypsiurus balasiensis*	**53**	Common Iora	*Aegithina tiphia*
14	Eurasian Moorhen	*Gallinula chloropus*	**54**	Black Drongo	*Dicrurus macrocercus*
15	Grey-headed Swamphen	*Porphyrio poliocephalus*	**55**	Greater Racket-tailed Drongo	*Dicrurus poradiscus*
16	White-breasted Waterhen	*Amaurornis phoenicurus*	**56**	Indian Paradise-flycatcher	*Terpsiphone paradisi*
17	Black-winged Stilt	*Himantopus himantopus*	**57**	Long-tailed Shrike	*Lanius schach*
18	Yellow-wattled Lapwing	*Vanellus malabaricus*	**58**	Rufous Treepie	*Dendrocitta vagabunda*
19	Red-wattled Lapwing	*Vanellus indicus*	**59**	House Crow	*Corvus splendens*
20	Bronze-winged Jacana	*Metopidius indicus*	**60**	Large-billed Crow	*Corvus macrorhynchos*
21	Asian Openbill	*Anastomus oscitans*	**61**	Ashy-crowned Sparrow Lark	*Eremopterix griseus*
22	Painted Stork	*Mycteria leucocephala*	**62**	Common Tailorbird	*Orthotomus sutorius*
23	Oriental Darter	*Anhinga melanogaster*	**63**	Grey-breasted Prinia	*Prinia hodgsonii*
24	Little Cormorant	*Microcarbo niger*	**64**	Ashy Prinia	*Prinia socialis*
25	Grey Heron	*Ardea cinerea*	**65**	Zitting Cisticola	*Cisticola juncidis*
26	Purple Heron	*Ardea purpurea*	**66**	Grey-throated Martin	*Riparia chinensis*
27	Indian Pond Heron	*Ardeola grayii*	**67**	Wire-tailed Swallow	*Hirundo smithii*
28	Red-naped Ibis	*Pseudibis papillosa*	**68**	Red-rumped Swallow	*Cecropis daurica*
29	Black-winged Kite	*Elanus caeruleus*	**69**	Red-vented Bulbul	*Pycnonotus cafer*
30	Oriental Honey-buzzard	*Pernis ptilorhynchus*	**70**	Lesser Whitethroat	*Curruca curruca*
31	Shikra	*Accipiter badius*	**71**	Indian White-eye	*Zosterops palpebrosus*
32	Black Kite	*Milvus migrans*	**72**	Jungle Babbler	*Turdoides striata*
33	Jungle Owlet	*Glaucidium radiatum*	**73**	Asian Pied Starling	*Gracupica contra*
34	Spotted Owlet	*Athene brama*	**74**	Brahminy Starling	*Sturnia pagodarum*
35	Eurasian Hoopoe	*Upupa epops*	**75**	Common Myna	*Acridotheres tristis*
36	Indian Grey Hornbill	*Ocyceros birostris*	**76**	Indian Robin	*Saxicoloides fulicatus*
37	Common Kingfisher	*Alcedo atthis*	**77**	Oriental Magpie Robin	*Copsychus saularis*
38	White-throated Kingfisher	*Halcyon smyrnensis*	**78**	Tickell's Blue Flycatcher	*Cyornis tickelliae*
39	Pied Kingfisher	*Ceryle rudis*	**79**	Siberian Stonechat	*Saxicola maurus*
40	Asian Green Bee-eater	*Merops orientalis*	**80**	Pied Bushchat	*Saxicola caprata*
41	Indian Roller	*Coracias benghalensis*	**81**	Pale-billed Flowerpecker	*Dicaeum erythrorhynchos*
42	Coppersmith Barbet	*Psilopogon haemacephalus*	**82**	Purple Sunbird	*Cinnyris asiaticus*
43	Brown-headed Barbet	*Megalaima zeylanica*	**83**	Jerdon's Leafbird	*Chloropsis jerdoni*
44	Brown-capped Pygmy Woodpecker	*Dendrocopos nanus*	**84**	Baya Weaver	*Ploceus philippinus*
45	Black-rumped Flameback	*Dinopium benghalense*	**85**	Indian Silverbill	*Euodice malabarica*
46	Alexandrine Parakeet	*Psittacula eupatria*	**86**	Scaly-breasted Munia	*Lonchura punctulata*
47	Rose-ringed Parakeet	*Psittacula krameri*	**87**	White-rumped Munia	*Lonchura striata*
48	Plum-headed Parakeet	*Psi1acula cyanocephala*	**88**	Chestnut-shouldered Petronia	*Gymnoris xanthocollis*
49	Small Minivet	*Pericrocotus cinnamomeus*	**89**	Citrine Wagtail	*Motacilla citreola*
50	Indian Golden Oriole	*Oriolus oriolus*	**90**	White-browed Wagtail	*Motacilla maderaspatensis*
51	Black-hooded Oriole	*Oriolus xanthornus*	**91**	Paddyfield Pipit	*Anthus rufulus*
52	Common Woodshrike	*Tephrodornis pondicerianus*			

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Bird Humour

Umesh Mani

(From Facebook, May 23, 2023)

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Deccan Birders - Financial Statements FY 2021-22

BALANCE SHEET AS AT MARCH 31, 2023						
				Note No.	***31-03-2023***	***31-03-2022***
					`	`
I	**LIABILITIES**					
	1.	**Society Funds**				
		Capital Funds		1	***19,70,568***	18,94,350
					19,70,568	18,94,350
	2.	**Current liabilities**				
		Other Current Liabilities		2	**-**	33,300
					-	33,300
		TOTAL			***19,70,568***	19,27,650
II.	**ASSETS**					
	1.	**Non Current Assets**				
		Property, Plant and Equipment		3	***5,308***	6,244
	2.	**Current Assets**				
		Inventories		4	***2,075***	8,150
		Cash and Bank Balances		5	***19,37,111***	18,88,153
		Short Term Loans and Advances		6	***21,416***	20,787
		Other Current Assets		7	***4,657***	4,316
					19,65,259	19,21,406
		TOTAL			***19,70,568***	19,27,650

Per Our Report of Even Date

For C K S ASSOCIATES
Chartered Accountants
FRN: 007390S

For and on Behalf of the Executive Committee
DECCAN BIRDERS

P GANAPATI RAO
Partner
M.No.024113

JVD Moorty ***President***
Krishna Nagarajan ***Hon. Treasurer***
Srikanth B ***Hon. Secretary***

Hyderabad
July 31, 2023

RECEIPTS AND PAYMENTS ACCOUNT FOR THE YEAR ENDED MARCH 31, 2023						
				Cash	**Canara Bank**	**Total**
						`
1	**Opening Balance**			2,274	1,85,879	
2	**Receipts during the year**					
	Admission Fee					
	Life Membership Fees				18,000	
	Annual Membership Fees				8,000	
	Student Membership Fees				400	
	Interest received from Saving Bank				5,611	
	Interest received-F.D				81,800	
	Sale of Caps and T- Shirts			5,300	3,250	
	Donations					
	Income Tax Refund				13,666	
	Interest on Income Tax Refund				924	
	Fixed Deposit proceeds					
				7,574	**3,17,530**	**-**
3	**Payments during the year**					
	Audit Fees				11,800	
	Bank Charges				744	
	Post Box Charges			150		
	Postage & Courier			400		
	Printing and Stationery			1,950		
	Library Rent					
	Fixed Deposit - Canara Bank					
	Income Tax				5,249	
	Outstanding Expenses				33,300	
	Stipend				7,200	
	Honorarium				12,000	
	Website Maintenance				15,200	
				2,500	**85,493**	**-**
4	**Closing Balance**			5,074	2,32,037.42	-

For C K S ASSOCIATES
Chartered Accountants
FRN: 007390S

For and on Behalf of the Executive Committee
DECCAN BIRDERS

P GANAPATI RAO
Partner
M.No.024113

JVD Moorty
President

Krishna Nagarajan
Hon. Treasurer

Srikanth B
Hon. Secretary

July 31, 2023
Place: Hyderabad

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Trip Report: Umamaheshwaram, March 12, 2023

Shruti Prakash

The group present at the walk (Photo courtesy: Gokul Krishna Addanki)

Located in the Nallamala Forest around 100km from Hyderabad, this northern gateway of Srisailam is a beautiful hill surrounded by high trees, making it a haven for birds and wildlife.

After reaching the meeting point (Mehdipatnam flyover), the event was officially flagged off at 5:30AM. We had to drive through the beautiful Hyderabad-Srisailam highway to reach Umamaheshwaram. At the breakfast stop, three Indian Grey Hornbills flew over our car, giving the event a fauna flag-off. We could spot many birds on the electric wires; a few of them were the Black-winged Kite, Spotted Owlets, and 3 types of Babblers. When we stopped for the second time, we came across Ashy Woodswallow and Eurasian Collared Dove, and could hear the brain fever call of the Common Hawk Cuckoo.

We reached the destination by 8:30AM and were greeted by Rhesus Macaques, Bonnet Macaques and their calmer cousin the Grey Langur. Everyone gathered at the tank area, where we spotted a pair of Loten's Sunbirds.

Loten's Sunbird (Photo: KVV Satyanarayana)

Indian Paradise-flycatcher (Photo: KVV Satyanarayana)

The other highlights at the tank area were the Indian Paradise-flycatcher, Eurasian Hoopoe, Long-tailed Shrike, Rufous Treepie and many more.

Rufous Treepie (Photo: KVV Satyanarayana)

Black Drongo (Photo: KVV Satyanarayana)

On the way up the hill, along the stairway there was the constant companionship of our great ancestors. In between, we spotted the exotic Malabar Whistling Thrush also called the 'Whistling Schoolboy' for its whistle-like call. It indeed sounded like a playful whistle of joy. The other highlights while climbing was an Indian Giant Squirrel, a Crested Serpent Eagle and a White-browed Bulbul.

Crested Serpent Eagle (Photo: KVV Satyanarayana)

White-browed Bulbul (Photo: KVV Satyanarayana)

Spotted Dove (Photo: KVV Satyanarayana)

The beautiful forest range became visible as we reached the top. The hilltop had small waterfalls (mostly dried up) giving off a sense of misty coolness to the sunny morning. I got a chance to see the beautiful endemic bird of the region, the Yellow-throated Bulbul.

Yellow-throated Bulbul (Photo: KVV Satyanarayana)

Black Eagle (Photo: KVV Satyanarayana)

Green Bee-eater (Photo: KVV Satyanarayana)

Unfortunately, I missed the sighting of Black Eagle. The majestic bird is considered the 'King of Umamaheswaram', and has been seen after a very long time. I sincerely hope for the 'currents' to come my way next time. The other highlights on the hill were the White-bellied Drongo, Verditer Flycatcher, Blue Rock Thrush, and many other birds.

The trip ended with a tasty lunch, and on the way back, at the Dindi Reservoir, we saw a Common Kingfisher fishing in the waters, giving the warm feeling of "a beautiful end to the greater beginnings". I got to know a lot about birds and met very interesting people on this field trip and will keep looking forward to further events being organized.

The full list of birds seen during the trip is given below:

Sl No	Species Name	Scientific Name	Sl No	Species Name	Scientific Name
1	Indian Grey Hornbill	*Ocyceros birostris*	28	White-bellied Drongo	*Dicrurus caerulescens*
2	Spotted Owlet	*Athene brama*	29	Indian Robin	*Saxicoloides fulicatus*
3	Black-crowned Night Heron	*Nycticorax nycticorax*	30	Pied Bushchat	*Saxicola caprata*
4	Indian Roller	*Coracias benghalensis*	31	Indian Paradise-flycatcher	*Terpsiphone paradisi*
5	Black-winged Kite	*Elanus caeruleus*	32	Glossy Ibis	*Plegadis falcinellus*
6	Eurasian Collared Dove	*Streptopelia decaocto*	33	Grey-headed Swamphen	*Porphyrio poliocephalus*
7	Small Minivet	*Pericrocotus cinnamomeus*	34	Black-winged Stilt	*Himantopus himantopus*
8	Large Grey Babbler	*Argya malcolmi*	35	Common Kingfisher	*Alcedo atthis*
9	Common Hawk Cuckoo	*Hierococcyx varius*	36	Red-vented Bulbul	*Pycnonotus cafer*
10	Painted Francolin (call)	*Francolinus pictus*	37	Oriental Magpie Robin	*Copsychus saularis*
11	Rosy Starling	*Pastor roseus*	38	Plum-headed Parakeet	*Psi1acula cyanocephala*
12	Ashy Woodswallow	*Artamus fuscus*	39	Purple Sunbird	*Cinnyris asiaticus*
13	Spotted Dove	*Streptopelia chinensis*	40	House Sparrow	*Passer domesticus*
14	Yellow-billed Babbler	*Turdoides affinis*	41	Rose-ringed Parakeet	*Psittacula krameri*
15	Yellow-wattled Lapwing	*Vanellus malabaricus*	42	Plain Prinia	*Prinia inornata*
16	Loten's Sunbird	*Cinnyris lotenia*	43	Black Kite	*Milvus migrans*
17	Jungle Babbler	*Turdoides striata*	44	Rock Pigeon	*Columba livia*
18	White-browed Bulbul	*Pycnonotus luteolus*	45	Little Egret	*Egretta garzetta*
19	Malabar Whistling Thrush	*Myophonus horsfieldii*	46	Intermediate Egret	*Ardea intermedia*
20	Rufous Treepie	*Dendrocitta vagabunda*	47	Great Cormorant	*Phalacrocorax carbo*
21	Blue Rock Thrush	*Monticola solitarius*	48	Red-wattled Lapwing	*Vanellus indicus*
22	Long-tailed Shrike	*Lanius schach*	49	Blue-faced Malkoha	*Phaenicophaeus viridirostris*
23	Black-headed Cuckooshrike	*Coracina melanoptera*	50	Eurasian Hoopoe	*Upupa epops*
24	Grey Wagtail	*Motacilla cinerea*	51	Crested Serpent Eagle	*Spilornis cheela*
25	Ashy Drongo	*Dicrurus leucophaeus*	52	Black Eagle	*Ictinaetus malayensis*
26	Black Drongo	*Dicrurus macrocercus*	53	Verditer Flycatcher	*Eumyias thalassinus*
27	Yellow-throated Bulbul	*Pycnonotus xantholaemus*			

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Bird of the Month

Text and Photos: Umesh Mani

Eurasian Spoonbill (*Platalea leucorodia*)

Eurasian Spoonbill Non-breeding
(Chennai, February 04, 2023)

Eurasian Spoonbill Breeding
(Chennai, March 06, 2022)

Eurasian Spoonbill Immature
(Chennai, January 28, 2023)

Order: Pelecaniformes
Family: Threskiornithidae
Genus: *Platalea*
Species: *P. leucorodia*
Size: 80-90 cm

Description & distribution: The Eurasian Spoonbill is an unmistakable bird. A large wading member of the Ibis and Spoonbill family *Threskiornithidae*, the Eurasian Spoonbill is easily recognized by its large, spatulate black bill with yellow tip. The rest of the bird is mostly white, except for black legs. In breeding plumage, it develops a pale yellowish brown breast patch and a prominent nuchal crest behind the head. Immature birds have a pale bill, and show black tips to primaries.

The Eurasian Spoonbill is widely distributed across Africa, Asia and Europe. It is a resident breeder in most parts of its range or, if not resident, a local migrant; most northern breeding populations, however, tend to migrate south to northern parts of Africa or the warmer parts of Asia.

Three sub-species are recognized: *P. l. leucorodia*, seen across most of its range, *P. l. balsaci*, seen in some of the islands near Mauretania, and *P. l. archeri*, seen in the Red Sea and Somalia.

Habitat & behaviour: The Eurasian Spoonbill prefers extensive, shallow wetlands with muddy clay or fine sandy beds. It is also seen in marshes, rivers, lakes, floodplains and mangrove swamps, of fresh, brackish or saline water. For nesting and breeding, locations with undisturbed islands and reeds or scattered trees/shrubs are especially preferred. In the winter, populations may also be seen in sheltered marine habitats like estuaries, deltas, tidal creeks and coastal lagoons.

The Eurasian Spoonbill is usually seen in small groups scattered along the water. It is well known for its foraging action – it sweeps its bill from side to side in a scything motion as it moves forward, trying to find prey. Its diet consists mainly of aquatic insects, mollusks, newts, crustaceans, worms, leeches, frogs, tadpoles, shrimp, and small fish up to about 10-15cm long. It may also consume bits of algae or aquatic plants that are picked up along with prey. It is usually silent – so much so that even in its mixed breeding colonies, the main sounds are bill snapping and the occasional grunting and trumpeting. The flight is slow like most big water birds, with slow wingbeats and with the neck and feet extended. Flocks typically fly in V-formation or in diagonal single lines.

Nesting: The Eurasian Spoonbill breeds generally between July and November, though it could be later in South India, with some variations due to monsoon conditions – they are observed to coincide their breeding with the monsoons. It is a colonial breeder, and the nest is a massive stick platform on trees in or near water, and usually built alongside other birds like herons, storks, ibises, etc in a mixed heronry. The usual clutch consists of 4 dirty white eggs, sparsely spotted and blotched with reddish brown.

Local name: The Eurasian Spoonbill is known as *'Chamach baza'* in Hindi, *'Chamcho'* in Gujarati, *'Chamcha'* in Marathi, *'Gante mukku konga'* in Telugu and *'Karandi mooku naarai'* or *'Chappai chondan'* in Tamil.

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For information, write to: Deccan Birders, PO Box 45, Banjara Hills, Hyderabad – 500034. **Website:** www.deccanbirders.in. **E-group:** http://groups.google.co.in/group/deccanbirders. **Society membership** (in Rs.): Annual: 500 per annum; Student: 200 per annum; Corporate: 2000 per annum; Life: 3000. (*Add Rs 75 for outstation cheques.)*